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Strengthening of the United Nations system

Status of implementation of actions described in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change"

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the reform measures as considered in General Assembly resolution 57/300. The present report, prepared in response to that request, is an overview of the implementation. It should be read in conjunction with several subsidiary reports, prepared pursuant to specific provisions of resolution 57/300: on the intergovernmental review of the medium-term plan and the programme budget (A/57/786); on improving the performance of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; management improvements in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; on the review of technical cooperation in the United Nations (A/58/382); on improvements to the current process of planning and budgeting; and on enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector (A/58/227).

Further progress reports on the reform of the Department of Public Information will also be submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session in 2004, and on various elements of human resources management reform, to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. A report on strengthening the system of internal justice will be submitted to the General Assembly during the first resumption of its fifty-eighth session following the main part of the session. The annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization also reflects the changes to departmental activities over the last year.

* A/58/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General made a series of proposals under several broad headings:

(a) The section headed "Doing What Matters", included a commitment to align the activities of the Organization with agreed priorities and to reflect this alignment in a thoroughly revised programme budget proposal. Other commitments related to efforts to strengthen the Organization's work in the areas of human rights and public information;

(b) "Serving Member States better" focused on implementing a more integrated approach to planning and managing meetings and documentation, as well as proposals to improve the Organization's reporting;

(c) "Working better together", explored ways to improve coordination, both among the component parts of the United Nations in developing countries and between the Organization and civil society;

(d) "Allocating resources to priorities" described changes needed to streamline the Organization's complicated and labour-intensive system of budgeting and planning;

(e) "The Organization and its people: investing in excellence" put forward additional measures to ensure that the United Nations can count on an able, versatile and well-managed workforce.

2. In its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, the General Assembly provided guidance on the implementation of the actions set out in the Secretary-General's report, and in implementing these actions, the Secretary-General has taken into account the views expressed by Member States in their deliberations. Additional deliberations and guidance on specific elements of the reform package are expected from the General Assembly during its fifty-eighth session and from the Assembly's subsidiary bodies.

II. Aligning activities with priorities

3. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 57/300, the General Assembly welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to submit a programme budget that fully justified the resource requirements and better reflected the priorities laid out in the medium-term plan for 2002-2005, the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major international conferences. The budget proposed for the 2004-2005 biennium achieves this in the following ways:

(a) *Increased attention to development issues*. Monitoring and follow-up relating to the Millennium Development Goals are being enhanced; a unit to oversee financing for development has been established; resources dealing with the African continent have been consolidated; and modest additional resources for work on drug control, crime prevention and the promotion of human rights are being requested;

(b) *Significant resource reallocation either within or between sections of the budget*. Some $100 million is shifted between subprogrammes and 810 posts are proposed for redeployment;

(c) *Major reorganization and reallocation of resources* in the Department of Public Information, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In addition, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been reorganized to incorporate the mandates arising out of the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development and to develop a strategic planning capacity;

(d) *Discontinuance of recurrent outputs*. Nine hundred and eleven reports, meetings and other activities of marginal utility are proposed for elimination, in accordance with regulation 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation;

(e) *Increased resources allocated to the areas of information and communications technology and staff training*. Some $14 million in additional resources is requested to implement an enhanced information and communication strategy, along with an additional $2 million for staff development and learning programmes.

As a result of improved planning, better coordination and more systematic evaluations, future adjustments to the work programme are likely and will be reflected in subsequent budget exercises.

III. Strengthening human rights

4. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has moved forward with actions laid out in General Assembly resolution 57/300 to improve both its internal management and the services it provides to Member States. Changes have focused on four main areas, as set out below.

Increased support for national human rights capacity-building

5. Concerted efforts are under way to provide an integrated and consistent response to Member States that request support in strengthening their national human rights protection systems. The plan, being developed with other United Nations partners is aimed at encouraging the ratification of human rights treaties, helping integrate human rights into national development plans, assisting in the reform of national legislation and institutions and promoting better awareness of human rights. More detailed information will be provided to the relevant intergovernmental bodies. The protection mandate for monitoring, investigations and reporting will remain the exclusive responsibility of OHCHR and the wider human rights machinery.

Enhanced implementation of human rights treaties

6. Consultations among Member States, treaty bodies, and non-governmental organizations have taken place during recent years to develop closer cooperation and enhance the implementation of the principal human rights treaties. The Commission on Human Rights was briefed on this process. During the second inter-treaty committee meeting, held in 2003, representatives agreed that the preparation of individual treaty body reports helped to create networks and galvanize national

discussion around treaty issues. It was also agreed that national human rights institutions could play a stronger role in both the treaty reporting system and follow-up. Discussions on the idea of a consolidated report for the various treaties are continuing, and individual States parties may wish to adopt such an approach. As an alternative to the consolidated report, some Member States have chosen to expand their core document, which compiles information for all treaty bodies. Although States parties are not legally obliged to submit one, a core document can reduce their reporting burden and avoid the repetition of details contained in each of the treaty body reports. The Secretariat has been requested to prepare draft guidelines for an expanded core document for the third inter-committee meeting, in June 2004. Additional details on this consultative process are available in the report of the Secretary-General on management improvements in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

7. There is strong support for greater cooperation among treaty bodies and for the better harmonization of their reporting guidelines. All treaty bodies have been urged to adopt specific follow-up procedures and to take measures that would encourage the timely submission of reports and address the backlog issue.

Improving the system of special procedures

8. Steps have been taken in recent years to better support the special procedures and make them more effective. Details were presented to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session (see E/CN.4/2003/124). The steps include:

(a) producing a manual for special rapporteurs;

(b) drafting internal guiding principles regarding working relations between special procedures mandate holders and OHCHR staff;

(c) regular updating of an induction kit for special procedures mandate holders, which would include reporting requirements;

(d) strengthening the support provided by OHCHR through additional human resources and the establishment of a quick response desk.

9. A Special Procedures Branch was established in OHCHR as from 1 May 2003. Since then, OHCHR has initiated consultations on how the special procedure mechanisms can be improved even further, in line with the Secretary-General's recommendations.

10. At a meeting of special procedures mandate holders held in June 2003, it was decided that the following concrete steps would be undertaken with the support, as appropriate, of OHCHR:

(a) strengthened joint initiatives, including joint urgent appeals, statements, press releases and communications;

(b) an analysis of the working methods of the various mandate holders, with a view to identifying good practices;

(c) systematic debriefing between desk officers after country visits in order to facilitate follow-up;

(d) strengthened cooperation with United Nations country teams in the preparation, conduct and follow-up of country visits;

(e) preparation of a feasibility study on ways to enhance the dissemination of findings and recommendations of special procedures;

(f) interaction between special procedures mechanisms and the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council;

(g) continuous exchange of information and communications between mandate holders;

(h) further strengthening of the interactive dialogue with the Commission on Human Rights.

Management improvements in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

11. Management improvements over the past year have focused on the implementation of the recommendations of the management review of OHCHR conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (see A/57/488). The details of implementation will be the subject of a separate report to the General Assembly. The reorganization will be described in the updated Secretary-General's bulletin on OHCHR and will reflect efforts to sharpen the policy directions and responsiveness of the Office.

12. Additional changes to the structure, staffing and financing of the Office should improve the management capacity of OHCHR. The principal changes are as follows:

(a) the establishment of two new branches, one on special procedures and the other on external relations;

(b) the rationalization of the system of OHCHR regional representatives;

(c) the initiation of a roster of human rights officers to serve with United Nations peacekeeping missions;

(d) the regularization of OHCHR staff under the 100 series of the Staff Rules;

(e) strengthened financial and budgetary management through the development of a financial/programming database;

(f) a refined system of annual appeals for voluntary contributions and the corresponding annual report on the use of those contributions.

IV. Enhancing public information

13. The past year has seen the implementation of several steps to improve the operations of the Department of Public Information, both at Headquarters and in the field. The Committee on Information has been actively engaged in this process, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/300, and has responded positively to the efforts made to strengthen the Department.

Restructuring

14. The major part of the restructuring of the Department of Public Information has now taken place, with the Department's activities divided among three new divisions since November 2002 in accordance with the Secretary-General's

proposals. The transfer of the Cartographic Section to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations awaits consideration by the General Assembly in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, in accordance with paragraph 16 of its resolution 57/300.

Evaluation

15. With support from the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department is developing an annual programme impact review in order to systematically evaluate its activities. This review will involve a regular assessment by programme managers of the performance of communications programmes and services, as well as training to build an institutional capacity for self-evaluation. Results from the first annual programme impact review will be reported to the Committee on Information in 2004.

16. By the end of 2003 the Department will have a set of preliminary performance measures in place, along with baseline data relating to departmental goals. A two-step process for assessing impact will then be undertaken. First, exposure to messages will be measured (e.g., through analysis of press coverage or listeners reached), followed by an assessment of whether audiences responded to the messages in any meaningful way. This exercise will require resources and expertise not currently available to the Department. The involvement of external partners is therefore anticipated.

17. Training to support the Department's new operating model is under way. Most programme managers have now been trained in evaluation techniques, while staff at all levels are undergoing training in measuring the impact and effectiveness of products and activities.

United Nations information centres

18. The Department is working on an action plan, in consultation with Member States, to ensure a seamless transition from the model of United Nations information centres at the national level to the new regional model, while seeking to safeguard the accrued experience, knowledge, institutional memory and partnerships of the national information centres.

19. As a first step, the Secretary-General is proceeding with the establishment of a regional hub in Western Europe. This will entail the closure of the nine national information centres located in countries of the European Union[1] and the creation of a regional hub, by 31 December 2003. The hub will be located in Brussels, subject to the conclusion of an agreement between the Secretariat and the Government of Belgium. The information services located in Geneva and Vienna, which service the Headquarters offices in those cities, will not be affected.

20. The Western European hub will be staffed and resourced to work in all current languages of the European Union and will respond to information needs in the region. The new operating concept will allow the Department to redirect resources to other priorities, including to information centres in developing countries (in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/130 B of 11 December 2002), strengthening multilingualism on the United Nations web site and the systematic evaluation of the impact of the Department's activities. In 2004, at its twenty-sixth session, the Committee on Information will consider a progress report on the

implementation of the regional hub proposal, with the objective of applying this initiative in other regions.

Libraries management

21. The Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries was formed in March 2003. The Committee meets quarterly under the chairmanship of the Director, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information, and its members include the head/chief librarians or other representatives of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna/United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the regional commissions, United Nations University and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

22. The Committee has been tasked with developing policies and coordinating operations among all United Nations libraries. Its work plan addresses the following areas:

(a) archival collections of United Nations documents;

(b) bibliographic control of United Nations documents;

(c) collaborative reference services;

(d) collections/resource sharing;

(e) hardware, software and web content;

(f) public relations;

(g) small and field libraries.

23. Examples of the specific initiatives to be completed by late 2003 include the establishment of a multilingual United Nations libraries research gateway on the Internet, the creation of a master list of core areas of specialization at United Nations libraries worldwide and the incorporation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific as a full partner in the Shared Indexing Programme. A detailed report on this subject will be submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session.

V. Streamlining publications and reports

24. The report on the strengthening of the United Nations outlined several measures to reduce the number of United Nations publications and reports and to improve their coherence, focus and scheduling. This is an area where several tangible improvements have already been achieved, and additional efforts are under way.

Publications

25. The Publications Board was reconstituted as a standard-setting body in February 2003. Its main mandate is to review and determine the policies governing the preparation, distribution and sale of publications, both printed and electronic, as

well as to draft new and revised administrative instructions to implement publications policy.

26. The Board meets on a monthly basis, but performs much of its work through interdepartmental working groups. For example, the interdepartmental Working Group on Internet Matters recently prepared a set of technical guidelines for United Nations Internet publishing. As a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 57/300, a separate Working Group has been established to look into the feasibility and cost of online publications delivery, supplemented by a print-on-demand capability.

27. As an integral part of the preparation of the biennial budget, all publications programmes being proposed by Secretariat entities are now channelled through the relevant Executive Committees. Each Executive Committee has the responsibility to review plans for publication, ensure coherence, avoid duplication and establish clear priorities regarding what is to be published.

28. This past year, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs pioneered an exercise to coordinate the publication programmes of its members. In the context of the preparation of the 2004-2005 budget, Committee focal points discussed content of publications and in this way were able to enhance collaboration and coherence. This arrangement will continue annually. In addition, there is now an arrangement by which author departments of global and regional surveys and the flagship publications issued by economic and social affairs entities share drafts and consult with each other prior to the issuance of a publication. Information regarding the timing of the issuance of flagship reports is routinely being shared.

29. Overall there has been an 18 per cent decrease in recurrent publications and a 23 per cent decrease in non-recurrent publications over the period 2002/03 to 2004/05. Budget data for 2004/05 indicate 192 discontinued publications and reports.

Reports

30. The confluence of two initiatives — the General Assembly's own efforts to revitalize its work and the Secretary-General's reform proposals — is creating positive momentum for progress in this area. In its resolution 57/300, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to start a consultative process with the President of the Assembly and Chairmen of the Main Committees, with a view to consolidating reports on related subjects, if decided by the Main Committees. In the context of the revitalization of the work of the Assembly, the President of the Assembly held a number of consultations on this question between April and June 2003 with the Chairmen of the Main Committees.

31. The President requested proposals on streamlining the work of the General Assembly, including on the consolidation of reports. Several proposals from the Chairmen and from a number of Member States were received and have now been discussed by the Bureaux of some of the Main Committees. The President presented these proposals at open-ended informal consultations of the plenary on 18 June 2003. Although no specific decisions were taken at that meeting, there was general and strong support for consolidating reports of the Secretary-General on related topics as a means to facilitate debate and reduce documentation.

32. Preliminary efforts by departments to consolidate reports for the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly have resulted in a 13 per cent reduction in the

number of reports. It is the intention of the Secretary-General to request all concerned departments and offices to continue vigorously reviewing their reporting requirements with a view to further consolidating reports, where possible.

33. The review by the Second and Third Committees of their respective programmes of work, and the consideration of issues in a more coordinated manner, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, should result in a reduced number of resolutions and of reports requested from the Secretary-General.

34. Another way to reduce the number of reports is to address their frequency. The Secretariat will assist the President of the General Assembly, as well as the Chairmen and other officers of the Main Committees, as requested, in reviewing the agenda of the General Assembly and its Main Committees to identify agenda items that could potentially be considered on a biennial or triennial basis rather than annually.

VI. Managing conferences and meetings

35. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management has moved forward with the actions identified in document A/57/289 and Corr.1 to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of its conference management function. In order to reach the goals of unified conference management policies, methodologies and practices, streamlined operations and enhanced coordination and utilization of resources across all locations, the Department is working with the Office of Internal Oversight Services to develop new policies and work practices.

36. An implementation team composed of representatives of all subprogrammes of the Department has developed an action plan to introduce more efficient workflow processes and migrate to new technologies, as well as to move towards integrated management of all conference-related resources. The initial 10-month implementation phase has yielded tangible positive results in virtually every area of activity of the Department, as follows:

(a) *Conference management*. More cost-effective planning and programming of services has been achieved;

(b) *Better support for the President of the General Assembly*. A draft programme of work for the fifty-eighth session was prepared well ahead of the opening of the session in order to assist the incoming President in the planning of activities, and facilitate the handover process from one presidency to the next;

(c) *Rationalizing the work of the Main Committees*. The programme of work is discussed at an earlier stage to better synchronize it with the issuance of mandated documents;

(d) *Documentation workflow*. A slotting system for document processing has been introduced, and policies relating to length of documents are enforced with more rigour. As a result, over 90 per cent of the reports originating in the Secretariat submitted in the first five months of 2003 were in accordance with the established page limit. Sessional documents are being issued earlier in 2003 than in previous years;

(e) *Budgetary and programmatic discipline*. Strict adherence to results-based budgetary practices has led the Department to keep its expenditures in line with earmarked resources.

37. Following a first positive review by the Assembly in March 2003 of the Department's reform efforts, full reports on the pattern of conferences and improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management will be presented to the Committee on Conferences in September. The proposed 2004/05 budget reflects a number of post redeployments arising from efficiency gains, as well as an increased reliance on technology for documents production and meetings management.

VII. Strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations presence in developing countries

38. In keeping with General Assembly resolution 57/300, paragraph 22, four principal elements were identified to strengthen the Organization's field presence: common tools and instruments for harmonizing development cooperation programmes; integrated planning and budgeting tools for countries emerging from conflict; common databases and knowledge networks; and strengthening the resident coordinator system.

39. At the request of the Economic and Social Council (see E/2003/L.20), the details of the implementation plan to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations presence in developing countries will be discussed in 2004 as part of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development.

Simplification and harmonization of programming tools

40. The principal objectives of the ongoing simplification and harmonization exercise are to streamline complex rules and reduce transaction costs for programme countries, increase the effectiveness of development assistance and improve accountability. The United Nations Development Group Executive Committee (composed of representatives of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Population Fund) is working to introduce the new programming tools listed below for five country programmes in 2003, with the aim of expanding their use to more than 80 country programmes by 2006.

(a) In the area of programme planning, a new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) results matrix lays out the linkages between national priorities, overall United Nations contributions and the contributions of each agency in a single document. A new country programme action plan and an annual work plan replace the diverse United Nations agency country management

documents. A common format is being introduced by the funds and programmes to plan, request funds and review progress;

(b) In the area of programme implementation, programme effectiveness is enhanced when agencies, funds and programmes collaborate at the country level. Programme reviews revealed some form of joint programming in over 100 countries. To promote and facilitate opportunities for joint programming, revised guidelines have been developed and are currently being tested for introduction to all offices in 2004;

(c) Streamlined tools for evaluation and reporting have also been developed. A joint evaluation plan will use the goals and common outcomes of the UNDAF and the results matrix as bases for measuring the work of the funds and programmes. Additionally, a standard format for reporting on achievements has been developed and will replace the multiple reporting arrangements that currently exist;

(d) To facilitate shared resource management and transfer of funds on the basis of a common assessment of the financial systems of national partners, funds and programmes working with the same national partners would use the same modality for transferring resources. This will reduce transaction costs for national partners. In addition a mechanism has been developed to allow donors to provide funding through a single agency, with the country team then determining how the funds will be allocated among agencies. Finally, a pooling mechanism is being developed to allow one agency to disburse funds on behalf of other agencies when they are supporting the same national partner to achieve the same result.

Post-conflict transition countries

41. To improve the coherence and integration of the United Nations response in post-conflict transition, the joint Working Group on Transition Issues was formed in November 2002.[2] The Working Group reviewed the Organization's experience in eight transition situations and identified the following lessons learned and recommendations for future operations:

(a) Each transition is unique, requiring thorough and situation-specific understanding and assessment. The United Nations system needs to find ways to synthesize experiences and ensure that lessons are learned;

(b) The early designation of a humanitarian or resident coordinator as deputy special representative of the Secretary-General in each situation has proved to facilitate links among the political, peacekeeping and operational wings and address the variance in mandates for different United Nations offices at a given location;

(c) Given the fluidity of transition contexts, humanitarian action often needs to continue within a process that anticipates a seamless scaling down of humanitarian assistance and a concurrent scaling up of reconstruction efforts. This process requires joint action between humanitarian and development actors through a single, integrated strategy aimed at addressing the underlying causes of a crisis situation. Transition planning should include contingency planning and be underpinned by needs assessments that identify priorities and results and are regularly updated and undertaken jointly with all stakeholders;

(d) National ownership of transition processes should be actively promoted. This requires particular efforts in capacity-building, advocacy and negotiation. The

collective United Nations response should be linked, where possible, to national development plans and budgets. Measures may be needed to secure the flow of external resources for the payment of salaries and the resumption of basic services;

(e) The United Nations country team should develop a single strategic plan for mobilizing resources that includes recourse to the various instruments available, such as consolidated appeal processes, dedicated donor conferences and agency-specific mechanisms. This will help to limit the funding gaps often encountered in transition situations, which is particularly important given the need to finance quick-impact programme assistance. The Working Group is planning a forum in early 2004 to further highlight issues relating to funding transition situations.

Knowledge management and non-resident agencies (agencies not represented in the field)

42. The United Nations Development Group is exploring ways to harness more effectively the existing knowledge within the United Nations system through communities of practice and knowledge networks. This could be achieved through the following measures:

(a) Establishing knowledge networks or building on existing ones, such as the Millennium Development Goal Network. These communities of practice could operate at both the global and the country level;

(b) Developing an information technology platform to ensure that the expertise of non-resident agencies and regional entities is available to United Nations country teams;

(c) Strengthening the capacity at the country level to manage knowledge;

(d) Developing clear criteria for quality products and processes, as well as incentives to reward knowledge-sharing;

(e) Providing support to Governments to turn data into policy — for example, in monitoring and reviewing national plans and strategies, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, through the development of national statistical databases to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Additional resources will be required to ensure that a concrete plan can be implemented in a few pilot countries.

Strengthening the resident coordinator system

43. During the 2003 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, Member States reiterated the need for greater participation of the specialized and technical agencies in the functioning of the resident coordinator system. The Council encouraged all organizations of the United Nations to collaborate in finding innovative ways to tap into the wealth of expertise available globally to support national efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals (see E/2003/L.20, para. 30).

44. Discussions are under way in the United Nations Development Group to continue work in the following areas:

(a) Dedicating staff to serve agencies not represented in the field. This should be supported by knowledge management systems to enable access for country teams to the expertise and information of the relevant agencies;

(b) Making available to resident coordinators a minimum core staff capacity in the areas of strategic planning, aid coordination and information management. This support should be flexible enough to be scaled up or down depending on country needs and levels of complexity;

(c) Providing a greater level of authority to the resident or humanitarian coordinator in order to strengthen strategic planning and prioritization at the country level. This is particularly important in post-conflict transition countries;

(d) Supplementing core financing provided by the United Nations Development Programme, the funder and manager of the resident coordinator system, with additional financing, which could be obtained through shared funding of coordination activities by all participating agencies. Other options are the establishment of a trust fund financed by donors, earmarked for supporting country-level coordination, or contributions from the regular budget of the United Nations.

VIII. Clarifying roles and responsibilities in technical cooperation

45. A review of technical cooperation activities in a number of areas of the United Nations Secretariat and in funds and programmes was undertaken and is being transmitted to the General Assembly in a separate report on the review of technical cooperation in the United Nations (A/58/382), pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/300, paragraph 22. A key objective of the review is to provide information on a representative selection of issues on which the United Nations undertakes technical cooperation with a view to assisting the countries in which programmes operate in their decision-making with regard to technical cooperation and assisting donors in adjusting their funding decisions where required.

IX. Strengthening the management capacity of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

46. The 2004/05 budget proposal reflects a number of measures aimed at strengthening the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in particular its management capacity, consistent with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 57/300, paragraph 24. Specifically, the budget proposal outlines a realignment of the entire Department in accordance with the new mandates arising out of the Millennium Declaration and the subsequent global conferences in Monterrey and Johannesburg. An important feature is the configuration of three central offices reporting directly to the Under-Secretary-General:

(a) The Development Policy and Planning Office, whose work will include strategic planning and building policy coherence within the Department and throughout all of the Secretariat's economic and social sectors;

(b) The Financing for Development Office, which will provide a dedicated capacity for the follow-up and implementation of the Monterrey Consensus;

(c) An Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, which will assist with central policy coordination and support intergovernmental and inter-agency processes.

47. The substantive divisions of the Department will be reorganized into two clusters, each reporting to an Assistant Secretary-General, if agreed, one focusing on data analysis and information and the other on support for intergovernmental processes in the various policy areas, as well as on support for related operational responsibilities. The additional Assistant Secretary-General position proposed in the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations will be responsible for the responsibilities relating to data analysis and information. The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women will not be affected by these changes.

X. Office of the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa

48. The Office of the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa has been established. The Secretary-General's bulletin issued on 23 April 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/6) provides a detailed description of the responsibilities and functions of the Office. Resources for the Office will be provided from the funds previously allocated to the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries and those from the Office of the Adviser for Special Assignments in Africa, pursuant to paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution 57/300. The Office is responsible for coordinating and guiding the preparation of Africa-related reports and United Nations system support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development, as well as coordinating global advocacy in support of the New Partnership.

XI. Promoting partnerships

49. Paragraphs 27 and 28 of General Assembly resolution 57/300 highlighted two principal areas for further work in strengthening interaction between civil society and the United Nations system: the establishment of a panel of eminent persons to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society and the creation of a partnership office as part of the effort to enhance cooperation with the private sector.

Engaging civil society

50. The Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations Relations with Civil Society was established in February 2003, under the Chairmanship of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former President of Brazil, to formulate recommendations to the Secretary-General on how to enhance interaction between the Organization and civil society. The 12 members of the Panel, individuals serving in their personal capacity, bring a wealth of relevant experience in government, parliaments and non-governmental organizations.

51. The Panel's task is to review existing guidelines, decisions and practices regarding civil society organizations' access to and participation in United Nations

deliberations and processes; to identify best practices in the United Nations system and in other international organizations; to examine how the participation of civil society actors from developing countries can be facilitated; and to review how the Secretariat is organized to facilitate, manage and evaluate the United Nations relationship with civil society and to share experiences in this regard. The Panel is to submit practical recommendations to the Secretary-General by May 2004 for his consideration.

52. The Panel held its first meeting in June at United Nations Headquarters and agreed on the outlines of a work programme that emphasizes widespread consultation with stakeholders. The Panel's activities will be chronicled on the United Nations web site.

Engaging the private sector

53. Voluntary contributions have been sought for a partnership office, which will be established in the near future. This office would bring under one umbrella the two Secretariat entities dealing most directly with the private sector and foundations: the Global Compact Office and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships. In addition to providing direction to these existing entities, the partnerships office would work with the network of private sector focal points across the United Nations system to develop common policies and the systematic sharing of best practices. As partnership approaches expand throughout the United Nations system, there will be a growing need to ensure common standards of accountability, assessment and reporting.

XII. Allocating resources to priorities

54. Changes in the programme of work proposed in the 2004/05 budget document are described in paragraph 3 above. The budget document itself has been shortened; it has one third fewer pages than that for the previous biennium. Technical detail on post and budgetary allocations has been taken out of the main document. Greater attention has also been given to making the introduction to the budget more strategic, highlighting significant changes to the proposed work programme and providing greater alignment of activities with priorities. It is hoped that these changes, along with efforts to improve the quality of the information contained in the budget document, will assist Member States in focusing on overall questions of strategy and budgetary oversight in their intergovernmental discussions.

55. In addition, the Secretary-General proposed further improvements to the planning and budgeting system, including a shorter, more strategic medium-term plan that is linked to the budget outline and a strengthened system of evaluation and monitoring. Additional detail on these proposals will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, as requested in resolution 57/300. The Secretary-General also proposed a single-stage intergovernmental review of plans and budgets, details of which have been provided in a subsequent report to the General Assembly (A/57/786).

56. Regarding individual peacekeeping operations, budgets for the financial period beginning 1 July 2003 have now been prepared using a results-based format along with aggregated resource data. This initiative has led to a more compact, user-friendly budget and has facilitated strategic review by the governing bodies. Both

the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee have responded positively to this approach.

57. Action 24 of the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations contained a number of proposals for improving the management of the United Nations trust funds. Work is now under way to consolidate funds and reduce their number, harmonize relevant rules and reporting requirements as much as possible and streamline procedures for accessing moneys.

XIII. The Organization and its people

58. The latest proposals by the Secretary-General were aimed at supplementing and reinforcing the basic building blocks of the human resources strategy endorsed by the Assembly three years ago. They include measures to further encourage staff mobility, particularly in field locations; expand career opportunities for General Service staff; help staff to achieve a better balance in their professional and personal lives; and strengthen staff management throughout the Organization.

Mechanisms and incentives to encourage mobility

59. A working group has been constituted to pursue all the components of action 25 of the Secretary-General's report. A review of the contractual arrangements and benefits offered to Secretariat staff in the field has begun and will be completed by the end of 2003. A preliminary assessment has revealed differences in entitlements and benefits packages, as well as in policy application, between the Secretariat and the United Nations funds and programmes and between the various categories of personnel. Areas of divergence include treatment of non-family duty stations, rest and recuperation schemes, leave entitlements, and travel and shipment procedures. In addition, the High-level Committee on Management has established an inter-agency task force to identify ways to reduce current barriers to mobility between common system organizations and review all impediments to the employment of spouses of United Nations staff at various duty stations.

Expanding opportunities for General Service staff

60. Action 27 of the Secretary-General's report made a commitment to develop a comprehensive plan for improving career opportunities for General Service staff, who make up approximately 48 per cent of the Organization's workforce. Work has begun to develop such a plan, which will require further consultations with staff. An initial statistical analysis of staff in the General Service and related categories is soon to be completed, together with a review of policies and practices in comparable organizations, especially in the areas of induction, career planning and opportunities for mobility. This is due to be completed by the end of 2003.

61. In terms of overall functions and responsibilities, a first step has been taken with the development of generic job profiles, which have been completed for more than 40 per cent of General Service positions. This has involved updating job requirements, titles and requisite skills and competencies to meet evolving organizational needs. The availability of these profiles on the web increases transparency and assists staff in planning their careers. Expanded learning programmes for General Service staff are also being piloted. General Service staff

make up 59 per cent of total participants in staff development activities Secretariat-wide.

62. In addition, a study on ways to promote General Service staff members to Professional posts was requested in General Assembly resolution 57/300, paragraph 39, and will be submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

Helping staff to balance professional and private lives

63. Flexible working arrangements were introduced for all Secretariat departments as from 1 February 2003. Subject to the work requirements of each department or office, staff can now avail themselves of various options, including staggered work hours and working away from the office. The Office of Human Resources Management is monitoring the situation to ensure that these working arrangements are broadly applied.

64. In addition, the Organization is undertaking specific measures to ensure that its policy on HIV/AIDS in the workplace is fully implemented. Goals are to improve staff awareness of the issue and its implications, ensure better access to medical care and review insurance coverage. Specific measures taken in 2003 include:

(a) The development of guidelines to ensure better access to voluntary and confidential counselling and testing in field duty stations;

(b) The appointment of HIV/AIDS policy advisers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at Headquarters, as well as in five of its field missions;

(c) The establishment of a revolving fund for procurement of anti-retroviral drug stocks in certain country offices and the use of the Staff Benevolent Fund in other countries to supplement out-of-pocket expenses related to treatment;

(d) Ten country visits by the United Nations Medical Director and other medical staff in order to advise United Nations country teams on improving access to care and treatment.

Continuing efforts to improve management

65. In its resolution 57/300, paragraph 40, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue efforts to improve the quality of the Organization's management. A comprehensive review of delegated authority is due to be completed by the end of 2003. It will cover programmes, budgets, procurement, asset management, information and communications technology and human resource management. At the same time, proposals are being considered to simplify various administrative systems, including expanding the use of lump sums as an option for certain staff and travel benefits. It is envisaged that there will be a generic delegation framework, supplemented by individual modifications, reflecting the distinct activities at various offices and geographic locations and the volume and nature of operations. Once the new framework has been agreed, efforts to redefine the respective roles and staffing of the Department of Management and executive offices can be effectively addressed. The implementation plan will also address training requirements.

Enhanced conditions of service

66. The International Civil Service Commission's review of pay and benefits resulted in the first increase in the base salary for Professional staff in many years, effective from January 2003. Agreement has also been reached on the introduction of a new Master Standard for the classification of Professional posts. Preparatory work is under way for a pilot study on broad banding of posts and the related subject of pay for performance, as well as for the establishment of the Senior Management Service. It is hoped that additional improvements in remuneration are achieved as a result of the Commission's ongoing efforts to improve conditions of service.

67. In terms of the functioning of the Commission itself, an independent review panel has been formed and will hold its first meeting in the third quarter of 2003. The results of this review will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

68. Overall, the subject of human resource management reform will be considered by the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, when a number of additional reports will be submitted for its consideration. The subjects covered will include an assessment of human resources reform in general, an initial review of the new recruitment, promotion and placement system, and efforts to rejuvenate the Secretariat.

XIV. Managing change

69. The Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations also indicated that implementing the reforms would require greater attention to training and information technology. The 2004/05 budget proposes increased resources in both of these areas.

70. With respect to training, a plan has been developed to ensure that managers and staff have the necessary skills to meet the new challenges of reform. The plan focuses on providing additional training in four main areas: leadership development and performance management; substantive skills training; information technology; and human and financial resources management. It is important to note that the total funds requested for training in the 2004/05 biennium still represent less than 1 per cent of the Organization's budget, markedly less than in comparable organizations.

71. With regard to information technology, the report on the revised information and communication technology strategy (A/57/620) was welcomed by the Assembly in its resolution 57/304 of 15 April 2003. The report highlighted three areas where additional attention will be needed: sharing and disseminating the Organization's institutional knowledge, modernizing the servicing of United Nations organs and governing bodies and improving administrative and management processes. Progress in these areas is dependent on the adequate and sustained investment of resources.

Conclusions

72. **The basic rationale behind the Secretary-General's agenda for further change was to ensure that the Organization devoted its attention to the priorities established by Member States in the Millennium Declaration and in the outcomes of the recent global conferences. The argument was made for a more focused programme of work, along with the need for the Secretariat to provide better service to Member States. As indicated in the present report and others, implementation is in progress.**

73. **The nature and pace of reform implementation will also depend on progress made in a number of intergovernmental forums, the most significant being the General Assembly, which, during its fifty-eighth session, will discuss systemic improvements to the planning and budgeting system. Other areas requiring further deliberation by Member States include funding for operational activities for development, to be discussed in the Economic and Social Council, and the reform of treaty bodies, to be discussed in the Commission on Human Rights.**

74. **Finally, the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations stressed that a stronger United Nations also depends on commensurate changes in the intergovernmental organs, most notably the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. Revitalizing the agendas of these bodies and improving their working methods will be an essential step towards improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization.**

75. **As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, "the need for a strong multilateral institution — one dedicated to the service of humanity as a whole — has never been more acutely felt than in the current era of globalization" (A/57/387, para. 2). The events of the last year have reinforced this statement. The implementation of the reform will require the continued collective commitment of United Nations staff, managers and Member States alike.**

Notes

[1] In Athens, Bonn, Brussels, Copenhagen, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris and Rome.

[2] The Working Group comprises representatives of the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs.